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13. John Crawford 1858

CHINA AND ITS TRADE.

A P A P E R

READ BY

JOHN CRAWFURD, F. R. S.

TO THE

Philosophical and Literary Society of Leeds,

OF WHICH HE IS AN HONORARY MEMBER,

ON WEDNESDAY THE 17TH NOVEMBER, 1858.

Printed by order of the President and Council of the Institution.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY C. W. REYNELL, LITTLE PULTENEY STREET,

MDCCCLVIII.

CHINA AND ITS TRADE.

MR PRESIDENT, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,—

I PROPOSE giving you a rapid sketch of China and its trade, more especially with a view to our own commercial intercourse with the empire. The proper country of the Chinese people,—of that people so different from the rest of the world in physical form, in manners, institutions,—even in language, contains an area of about 1,400,000 square miles, or is full twelve times the size of the United Kingdom. Seven out of its eighteen provinces are larger than Great Britain, and one of them twice as large. It extends from near the 18° of latitude to the 40°, and has a breadth and length of about 1,500 miles each. Some portion of it, therefore, lies within the tropic, and about a fourth part of it is so near to it as to yield what are called tropical products. The sugar-cane, for example, flourishes at the 26th degree of latitude. The range of climate may be judged by stating that the most southern portion of China, the island of Hainan, is in the same latitude with Jamaica, Canton with Calcutta, Shanghai with Alexandria in Egypt, and Pekin with Rome, while parts of Chinese Tartary have climates approaching in severity to the temperature of Siberia.

About one half of the surface of China is said to consist of mountains, with, however, frequent fertile valleys between, while the other is an alluvial, well-watered, and therefore fertile plain. Two mighty rivers with numerous affluents and branches are striking characteristics of the physical geography of China. These traverse the whole country from west to east, disemboguing in the Yellow Sea. To their existence must be ascribed much of the civilization of China, since, at one and the same time, they multiply the fertility of the land and afford cheap and easy means of intercommunication.

The two rivers in question are the Yangtse to the south and the Hoangho, or Yellow River, to the north. The first of these is the greatest river of the old world, and the American rivers only are comparable to it. It is said to be navigable for 800 miles by vessels of considerable burden, and is certainly so for 200, for ships of the line, for at that distance from the sea stands the old capital, Nankin, before the walls of which, and at a very convenient distance too, were anchored our own, in 1842. On the banks of this stream are situated some of the largest commercial cities of China, and the plain watered by itself, its affluents and branches, is stated to be peopled by 100 millions of inhabitants, or 27 parts out of 100 of the whole population of the empire.

The Yellow River, although also important, is of much inferior value

to the Yangtse. It is, in fact, a brawling, turbulent stream, very difficult to keep in decent order. Carrying with it a great quantity of alluvial matter, much of this is deposited in its bed, so that the surface of the river rises from 10 to 12 feet above the level of the surrounding country, and is only prevented from flooding it by high embankments. These require constant attention, and demand large disbursements from the imperial treasury. The Hoangho has, in fact, a governor and an establishment, as if it were itself a great province. The poverty of the Chinese treasury, the result of the existing anarchy, has caused the embankments to be neglected; and the consequence has been that last year the river broke through them and has made a new channel for itself, so that instead of disemboguing, as it ought to do, in the Yellow Sea, at the 30th degree of latitude, it has discharged itself in the Gulf of Pechili, four degrees further north, and this with immense destruction of life and property. The present Emperor says there are two matters which specially trouble him in the administration of the Empire—the Yellow River and the Barbarians, the English being the most obtrusive under the latter head.

China has a sea-coast of about 2,500 miles, and in the southern portion of this are many good harbours. It has also many islands, two of which, Formosa and Hainan are each considerably larger than the fertile and classic island of Sicily. I need only mention its dependencies to the north, Manchuria, Mongolia, and Tibet—probably equal in extent to China itself, but generally a land of cold mountains, deserts, and arid steppes, fitted for numerous flocks and herds, but maintaining only a scanty human population.

And now for the population of this vast country. By an actual census taken in 1813, or 45 years ago—and there is no ground to believe that it has since diminished—it amounted, in round numbers, without including its northern dependencies, to 362,000,000, which is equal to six times the population of the Russian empire, and full twelve-fold that of the United Kingdom. Although great, that amount is not an extravagant one, if we look to the extent and fertility of the country and the industry of the people who occupy it. The population is very unequally distributed, following, as was to be expected with a people chiefly agricultural, the ratio of the fertility of the land. The average density for the whole country gives but 280 to the square mile, which is about the same as that of our own country. The highest density, as might be expected, is found in the province which contains the ancient capital, Nankin, and which has, at once, the benefit of a fertile alluvial soil, of the sea, and of the great river. This gives 775 to the square mile, which is short of the density of Middlesex and Lancashire. The maritime provinces give an average of 480, the central of 347, and the northern, which includes the metropolitan province, only 250. One great province of the south-west, Yunan—full double the size of England and Wales, gives but 51 inhabitants to the square mile,—so that it is not, by one half, as populous as Scotland, by soil the poorest part of the three kingdoms.

China, however, is a very populous country; and, considering its means of maintaining its population, is in spite of its fertility, an over-peopled one. The mass of the labouring classes do not earn above 4d. a-day, while the necessaries of life are as dear as in England; and it is poverty that drives the people into brigandage, rebellion, and emigration. The present rebellion, which has now lasted five years, and which has carried massacre and desolation over four-and-twenty degrees of longitude and eight-and-twenty of latitude, is clearly traceable to pauperism.

Emigration has certainly been going on for two centuries, and is, at this moment, more rife than it ever was before. The Chinese emigrate to every country accessible to them. Tonquin, Cochin China, and Siam contain between them at least a million of Chinese and their descendants, and the Philippine and Malay islands about 250,000. In search of gold they have gone to California and to Australia, in each of which there are believed to be at present some 50,000 labouring bachelors of this people. Every man that emigrates from China is an adult male, and every man of the labouring classes—not a capitalist among them, and not a woman among them. When they emigrate to under-peopled countries, such as those I have first named, they bring labour which is wanted, and intermixing with races to which the Chinese are superior, they are therefore a benefit. When they plant themselves in Anglo-Saxon colonies, where they are an inferior race, they depreciate the wages of labour, discourage by so doing a genuine colonization, and are therefore a public nuisance. The legislation of California and Australia, which discourages their ingress, is, consequently, founded on sound principle.

With respect to the character of the immense population which I have named, it may be described in a very few words, in so far as it relates to my present object. The civilization of the Chinese goes back almost historically for 4,000 years; and it is certain that within 100 years of the time in which Alexander subdued Persia and invaded India—great achievements of which they never heard—the Chinese were already a people of sufficient wealth to be worth plundering, since they built a wall 1,500 miles in length, to keep out the predatory shepherds of the north—the men who could not be kept, even out of Europe itself five centuries later, but devastated and plundered it, under the name of Huns. That wall is, no doubt, a record of the folly of semi-barbarians, but it is also evidence that the people who built it must have been numerous, industrious, and, to a certain extent, even skilful.

Immemorially the Chinese have lived under the same laws and institutions; and these, however imperfect in the judgment of civilized Europeans, have been sufficient to give such security to life and property as to have created a stability, industry, and ingenuity unknown in any other country of Asia, in any period of Asiatic history.

In physical strength and vigour of constitution the Chinese are far superior to any other Asiatic people. In their capacity of bearing alternations of climate, they are even superior to Europeans; for on one side we find them labouring in the sun with impunity, at the equator in Borneo, and on the other in Manchuria, to which they have extended their migrations, five-and-fifty degrees distant from it. In the southern hemisphere in the 30th degree, and in the northern in the 40th, we find them competing in the gold diggings with Anglo-Saxons,—localities in which other Asiatics would not only not attempt competition, but perish. Everywhere the labour of a Chinese, whether as to amount or skill, is superior to that of other Asiatics,—to that of a Hindu, for example, certainly in the proportion of three to one. Idleness with a Chinese is disreputable, in proof of which it may be stated that they hold the priests of Buddha in small respect, considering them in no better light than that of sturdy beggars. They are frugal, but not like the Hindus, parsimonious, for what they make industriously they spend freely.

The sensuality of the Chinese is naked and undisguised, and they are certainly the least imaginative people in the whole world,—the very antithesis of the poetic temperament. With many superstitions, they have

little religion and no bigotry, the only exception to their religion being what has been called their "worship of ancestors,"—a powerful sentiment, which keeps them by the tombs of their forefathers which, indeed, they never quit without the hope of returning to them.

The Chinese are exceedingly mendacious, but mendacity would seem to be an accomplishment of all Asiatic civilisation of the highest class. The Malays, Javanese, and the like, being of the second or third order of civilisation only, are not mendacious, but the Hindus are so, and the Persians are preëminent,—what Congreve calls "liars of the first magnitude," practising very generally what my friend, Mr Carlyle, designates as "double distilled mendacity." This habit, however, in the Chinese does not prevent them from being honest and trustworthy when it is useful to them to be so, and English merchants are in the habit of entrusting large sums to travelling Chinese brokers and agents, with perfect safety.

The national vanity of the Chinese is egregious, and they admit of no equals. This has evidently arisen from their having never known equals. All the nations in their neighbourhood are infinitely below them in sense, in power, and in civilisation, and in one form or another these freely admit their own inferiority. They are, the Japanese, who have borrowed their written language and literature, but resisted their yoke; the people of Anam, or Cochin-China, whose king receives an investiture from the Chinese Emperor; the Siamese, who send him tribute; the Tartar nations, who are directly subject to the Chinese; and Tibet, which they have conquered.

The Chinese, whenever they can afford it, live comfortably,—are well clad, fed and housed. No kind of wholesome food comes amiss to them, and they are wholly free from those antipathies in diet which are so troublesome and irrational from Constantinople to Calcutta. In their persons and dwellings they are by no means fastidious. The late Sir John Barrow truly described them, in his account of the mission of Lord Macartney, as "a frowsy people." A French lady wrote to her friend in China, requesting him to send her a collection of the finest perfumes in the country, and his answer was that there was but one odour in China, and that one was not a perfume!

The Chinese are bad sailors and worse soldiers. Their ships have no shrouds and no yards. They have not learnt to go aloft, and will on no account attempt it. In this calling, and in this only, the natives of India excel them. They are by no means wanting in personal courage when there is a necessity for its exercise, or when there is a direct promise of profit by its exercise. Thus, they are far more formidable pirates than the Malays, of whose piracies we hear so much. Still they look on war as a foolish and profitless trade, and have made but small progress in the art, preferring the bow and arrow to the matchlock, the matchlock to the firelock, and the blunderbuss to the rifle. In a word, of all Asiatic people they are the least warlike, and being so have twice over, within the last five centuries, allowed themselves to be subdued and ruled by mere hordes of Tartar shepherds.

The Chinese have been described as a stationary people, which is not strictly true of them or of any other race of man; but they have, or at least their government has, a very great antipathy to innovation, even when it is palpable improvement. The politics and philosophy of the present Chinese are those of Confucius, who was a contemporary of Pythagoras, who lived 2,400 years ago, and of Mentius who was the cotemporary of Aristotle. Their ships continue to be of the same monstrous form

which they probably were in the days of these worthies. That form is their register, and any departure from it would be punished by fine, the wooden ruff, and the bamboo. In a fleet of ships of this form, Marco Polo, the Venetian—the man whose travels instigated Columbus to try to get to India by sailing westward—made a voyage to the Persian Gulf 550 years ago. That voyage occupied 18 months, and it is only a wonder how it was achieved at all. Whether the clumsy fleet ever got back to China is nowhere stated. As long as the monsoons favour them Chinese vessels can make one voyage in one year; but without these, or the shore to guide them, they are remediless. It is only in European ships that they can get to California or Australia.

But the Chinese, however difficult to move, are not immovable. They would not, it is obvious, have been what they are had they been at all times immovable. They received the Indian religion of Buddha in the second century of our era, and from India they had cotton and the art of weaving it, as late as the 13th century. Even within the comparatively short period that they have been known to Europeans, they have submitted to considerable changes. Thus, before their conquest by the present Manchoo Tartars, in the beginning of the 17th century, they wore turbans and long hair. The conquerors, in imitation of themselves, obliged them to douse their turbans and shave their heads, leaving only a long tail, so as to give the noblest part of the human body a considerable resemblance to the opposite extremity of a quadruped. The poppy is an exotic in China, and was made known to the Chinese by the Mahomedan merchants, who frequented their country centuries before Europeans. It is at present largely and openly cultivated by them. The Chinese have long received and extensively cultivated and used two American plants, which could only have been made known to them by Europeans, and certainly within the last 350 years. These are world-pervading tobacco and hardy maize which thrives in the coldest and the hottest regions of China. I will name one other article, not for its importance, but for a curious circumstance connected with it. Prussian blue, or the prussiate of iron used, at one time, to be a considerable article of import from England into China; but a common Chinese seaman, who came to England in an East India-man, when English sailors were scarce, had the sense or curiosity to visit a manufactory of this commodity, and having acquired a knowledge of the process, carried it to China; and there, where there is, as I have already hinted, no special horror of ill odours, the noisome manufacture flourishes, and the article has long ceased to be imported from this country.

After these necessary reflections on China and its people, I proceed to the most essential part of my subject,—commercial intercourse. I may begin with the Exports, which are nearly the same to all countries, and then treat of the Imports with the different countries with which China maintains commercial relations. China I may premise has been described by some writers as a country independent of all foreign commerce, on account of the variety of climates which it embraces, but independence is not true of any country in the world, and in the case of China is flatly contradicted by the poverty which drives its people to emigration.

China produces gold, silver, copper, tin, zinc, lead, iron, steel, quick-silver, and coals, and of all these it is itself the chief consumer: of some of them, indeed, it does not produce a sufficiency, and it is, on this account, or because the mines are remote from the maritime provinces, an importer. Gold and silver, China has as often exported as imported. Tin and copper it has always imported; its malleable iron is bad, but it

exports a large quantity of cast iron in the shape of shallow cauldrons, in very general use in all the neighbouring countries. At one time it exported a considerable quantity of spelter, under the name of tutenague, chiefly to India; and such, for a long time, was our ignorance of the productions of China, that this article was fancied to be a distinct metal, or peculiar alloy. When it was known to be only zinc, the countries which China had supplied with it came to be supplied from England and Germany, and even China itself became an occasional importer from the same quarters. In several of the provinces of China, coals would appear to be abundant, and they have been long in use in a country, much of which from its extensive cultivation, is destitute of timber for fuel. The existence of these coals is to us, who are soon to navigate its coasts and its internal waters in our steam vessels, a matter of the highest importance. The North-western Provinces are said to have the principal coal-fields, and from these there is water transport. The island of Formosa, however, has also abundant coals, and here, it has been stated, that it can be shipped at the cost of 13s. a ton.

Of the minor metals in such general use among European nations, the Chinese know nothing; and to show to what an extent this is the case, I will mention a fact which occurred to myself, and you will perhaps pardon the egotism which the narrative implies. When I was, 34 years ago, Governor of Singapore, then a small place, but which has now a population of 70,000, and an import and export each of 4,000,000*l.*, I asked and obtained leave to establish the first local newspaper. There then existed in India a censorship of the press, a mighty foolish, as well as mischievous institution. In virtue of my position, I was censor as well as Governor, and what was more difficult, I had to write "leaders." We had no Baines in Singapore, nor the tenth part of one, or I would not have written a word. It was difficult to find subjects that would not sin against the laws of the censorship. I went one day into the bazaar or public market for one, as Dr Johnson represents Shakespear to have gone to the Senate House for a buffoon. The market supplied one, as did the Senate House a buffoon to the poet. My Sempronius was a mass of the sulphuret of antimony, part of the ballast of a Malay prau. The article had been used by the Malay and Chinese women to add brilliancy to their eyes, and the new and accidental importation reduced the price of the old stock which had been brought all the way from Arabia, to one-tenth part of what it had been.

I was told that the antimony had been brought from Bornco, and from a place called Sarawak, of which I had never heard before, but which has since become famous as the principality of an enterprising Englishman, well known to you as Rajah Brooke, a gentleman with whom I have not always agreed in opinion, but for whose recent affliction I take this opportunity of expressing my unfeigned regret. The Chinese told us that they had often tried, in vain to get either tin or silver out of the sulphuret of antimony. A button of metal was smelted in their presence, in a blacksmith's shop, and of course a leader on the subject appeared in due course in the newspaper, recommending a trial of the sulphuret in England. The trial was successful, and ever since Sarawak antimony has furnished the principal supply of the United Kingdom. Not a printing type is made without it. The paper which I am reading has been printed with its assistance, and if any journal condescends to notice what I am now saying, it must do so with the help of Sarawak antimony. The discovery, you will observe, was, like many others, of a

similar nature, a matter of pure accident. Antimony is, however, but one of the many new articles which the freedom of Indiaa trade has elicited, and by no means the most important one. I could enumerate a dozen of more consequence, were this the proper place.

But, to return from this too long digression to my main subject; the staple vegetable productions of China are as various as might be expected in a country which extends over at least two-and-twenty degrees of latitude, or, if we include Tartary, over not less than five-and-thirty. In the warm south we have rice, the sugar-cane, and cocoa-palm; in the temperate region, tea, silk, and cotton; and in these and the cold, wheat and millets, with a very great variety of pulses, oil-giving plants, and the almost ubiquitous maize. To the mineral and vegetable products I may add some animal productions which, now that Tartary is thrown open to us, we may look for as exports. These are wool, hides, horns, and tallow.

With respect to all articles that are absolute necessaries of life, it is quite certain that none of these will form exports from China. Rice and wheat will no more be exported from densely-peopled China than are wheat and barley from densely-peopled England. They are far more likely to form articles of our importation, and one of them—rice, does so already. Cotton comes under the same head; it is very extensively cultivated, but produced in quantity inadequate to meet the demand, and can no more be exported than can hemp and flax from England. On the contrary, it is largely imported from our own dominions in India, as I shall presently explain.

But the two great staples of China, at present, are tea and silk, and these I feel bound to consider in some detail. China, from soil, climate, cheap labour, and the practice and experience of 2,000 years, has a natural monopoly in the production of tea. We have been now drinking tea, and it has formed a great staple of our consumption, for a hundred and fifty years, but no effectual competitor with China has yet appeared. In our colonies we raise the sugar-cane and cotton of India, the coffee of Arabia, and the cocoa of Mexico, with entire success; but the tea of China has defied us. The Dutch grow it in Java, within six degrees of the equator—20 degrees out of its birthplace, but it will not do. Our own Indian territory of Assam yields us about “one-sixtieth” part of what China does; but the plant, in this case, is a distinct species, and the flavour very different from that of the genuine article.

Green and black tea are one and the same plant botanically, and the whole difference lies in the different mode of preparing the leaves. The green is made rapidly, and the black by a slower process. The difference much resembles that between hay quickly made in clear weather, and that which is tediously made in rainy—the one of a bright green and the other of a dirty brown. It is to the enterprising Mr Fortune that we owe this simple and satisfactory account of the two descriptions of tea, about which botanists had greatly perplexed themselves from the days of Linnæus to our own. People are rather whimsical about the preference they give to the two varieties. The Chinese never drink green tea except medicinally, and our kinsmen in America drink hardly any other than green. We content ourselves with one-fourth part of green, and occasionally we mix the two together,—the mixture, in one part of the kingdom, Scotland, I believe, going under the queer name of “twist.” I remember it as a boy, and remember, also, what was miscalled “content,” which had neither black nor green.

Tea was first introduced into this country about the year 1650, during

the Protectorate, but there is no reason to believe that Mr and Mrs Cromwell ever drank tea. The first recorded English tea-drinker was Mr Pepys, the garrulous and amusing secretary of the Admiralty, himself the son of a tailor, but the progenitor of a well-earned peerage of our time. The event took place on the 25th of September, 1661, and is thus noted down in the well-known Diary :—" I sent for a cup of tea, a Chinese drink, of which I had never drank before," from which entry it would seem that Mrs Pepys was not of this first English tea-party.

Three years after Mr Pepys had drank his cup of tea, the then lackland, and now again happily also, lackland East India Company, presented to His Majesty Charles II sixteen pounds and two ounces of tea. This was what is now called "junk tea," for it was obtained not in China, with which we had no intercourse, but at the port of Bantam, in Java, then frequented by the shipping of China. It cost the Honourable Company 16s. a pound, and must have been such trash as would not now fetch threepence a pound in the London market!

The consumption, however, rapidly increased, and at the commencement of the 18th century averaged, perhaps half a million of pounds. It was quite fashionable in the reign of Queen Anne, and Pope represents Her Majesty as "sometimes" taking counsel and sometimes tea at Windsor, thus—

" Here then great Anna, whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take and sometimes tea."

You will, no doubt, observe from this couplet, that either Mr Pope's rhyme is bad, or our present pronunciation wrong, or that the Hibernian one is right, and I incline to the last opinion, since it is really the true pronunciation of the name for tea by the Chinese themselves, when they don't make it cha, which is another pronunciation in one of their uncouth and ever monosyllabic dialects.

In the beginning of the present century, neither monopoly nor heavy taxation could repress the Saxon taste for tea, and our consumption was 20,000,000 of pounds, and when the monopoly was overthrown in 1833, it was 30,000,000 of pounds. Now, under the auspices of free trade it is about 65,000,000. The wholesale price of this is estimated at about 5,000,000*l.*, and tea, when the duty was at the highest, yielded a revenue to the State of 6,000,000*l.*, which is about three times the whole revenue of the State when Queen Anne was drinking tea, or taking counsel at Windsor, and Marlborough fighting the battle of Blenheim! The very name has come to be domesticated among us, for it does not simply mean the exotic leaf which we imported from China 200 years ago, but also the beverage made from it, and a particular social meal,—even a particular time of the day, although upon this last meaning, our ladies indulging in their Anglo-Saxon predilection for "the cup that cheers but not inebriates," have thrown considerable obscurity by taking to drink it before as well as after dinner. Indeed there is no knowing where this propensity may end, and by-and-by we may see the tea-pot on the table morning noon and night, as is always the case in every well-ordered Chinese household.

The quantity of tea produced in China must be immense, when it is considered that it not only supplies its own 360 millions, every man, woman and child being a tea-drinker who can afford it, but all the rest of the world, Japan and Tonquin alone excepted. The quantity exported by land and water cannot well be less than 100 millions of pounds. What is of more consequence is, that there seems, for all practical

purposes, no limit to the supply. Within the last 100 years the Chinese consumers themselves have been more than doubled in number; requiring something like a double supply of tea. Within the present century, too, our own consumption has been more than trebled. America, within the last 75 years has added some twenty millions of pounds to the demand on China, yet all this has had no effect in raising the cost of teas in China. I have, indeed, seen a Canton Price Current 150 years old, and making due allowance for some variation in the denominations of teas, its quotations do not materially differ from those of the present day.

But now a few words on the other great staple of Chinese export, raw silk. The cocoon, or nest of the wild silk-worm was, no doubt, early employed, both in India and China, as a textile material; but the art of domesticating and rearing the caterpillar, as we domesticate and rear poultry and cattle, is admitted on all hands to have been an invention of the Chinese, and this some 500 years before the birth of Christ. The produce of the Chinese looms, although at a price exceeding its weight in gold, had reached Greece and Rome long before the commencement of our era. But the nurture of the silk-worm was not introduced into Europe until the middle of the sixth century. Two Christian monks of Persia (at that time there were Christians in Persia, for the Mahomedan religion was not planted there until near a century later) brought the eggs of the caterpillar in a bamboo-cane to Constantinople, from which eggs have sprang all the silk of Greece, Italy, France, Spain, and, I dare say, of Persia too, for the fine robes of the Medes and Persians were not their own manufacture, but brought from China. Strange enough it is that the raw material of the most exquisite of all our tissues should be nothing else than the mere bowels of an ugly worm! but so it is.

Some three years ago a murrain seized the descendants of the caterpillars bred from the eggs imported in the bamboo-cane, and then recourse was had to the parent country of the caterpillar, and China answered to the call. Under the monopoly, the export of raw silk from China was 2,000 bales a year, and the imperial traders who, backed by a capital which they called 12,000,000*l.* and the whole revenues of India, carried on the commerce of China, declared, over and over again, that it was wholly impossible to increase that miserable supply. From Shanghai alone there was exported last year 112,000 bales, or fifty-six times the quantity which the monopolists thought it quite impossible to exceed. The value was estimated at 10,000,000*l.*, or twice the value of our tea in England! The prices given were, of course, exorbitant, and it is certain that we outbid the Chinese manufacturers in their own market—a proceeding which, if persevered in, would in due time make us manufacturers of silks for the Chinese, as we are of cottons for the Hindus.

On minor articles of export from China I need not dwell at any length. The principal of them are sugar, camphor, cassia, and rhubarb. Cassia we receive only from China, and as a condiment it has nearly superseded the dearer article of cinnamon. Most of our camphor also we receive from it, a small quantity only coming to us from Japan. China both exports and imports sugar. The high rent of land—the necessary incident of a populous country, enhances the cost of producing sugar, as it does of corn; but sugar is far more of a manufacture than corn, and, in the case of China, high rent is to some extent compensated by low wages and superior manufacturing skill. Its southern provinces supply the northern, which also receive supplies from foreign countries such as Siam. We received ourselves, last year, 60,000 cwt. of sugar from China, of the value of near 80,000*l.*, and Western India, Persia, and Arabia annually receive

much larger quantities. I may here notice that wherever cane-sugar is produced, Bengal excepted, it is always the produce of the skill of Chinese. But for the Chinese settlers there would be no Java—no Manilla—no Siam sugars.

Most of our rhubarb is furnished by the Chinese, and this article is the produce of Tartary. We are, it would seem, mighty consumers of rhubarb, for China alone supplied us last year with 234,480 lbs. weight, of the value of better than 46,000*l.* At a moderate estimate, this quantity would furnish about 329,000,000 of doses, or full two-and-thirty doses for every man, woman, and child in the United Kingdom! I hope and believe that we re-exported a good deal, but then we also imported some from Turkey. It was in reference, perhaps, to our being such liberal consumers of this article that a braggart Viceroy of the "Two Provinces" once addressed a British functionary, reproving our ingratitude for the many favours which the Emperor showered upon us. "What," said he in a Proclamation, "would you do but for our tea? how could you live without our rhubarb?" It never entered into this dignitary's head that we paid for both; and that if we overdosed ourselves with one of them, it was no affair of his.

There was a time when we and the other nations of Europe took a considerable amount of Chinese manufactures. Of these, of all sorts and kinds, we imported last year to the value of just 43,570*l.*, which was exactly 2,447*l.* less than we took of Chinese rhubarb! The Chinese are pretty nearly what they were in the olden time, but we are not. We acquired the art of making porcelain from them, and now we make it better and cheaper than themselves. Old China is at present valued, not for its use but its oddness; but in the days of Queen Anne, when we had no porcelain of our own, it was highly valued on every account; and Pope, 150 years ago, in an oft-repeated couplet, adduced it as one of the highest proofs of command of temper in a perfect woman, that she could keep it even at the smash of her China.

"Spleen, vapours, and small-pox, above them all,
And mistress of herself, though China fall."

Our import of this once-prized article, with a quadrupled population and wealth multiplied at least ten-fold, was last year just 1,116*l.* worth. Most of it was probably intended for curiosity shops.

There was a time, not very long past, which many of you may remember, when every gentleman had a portion of his summer dress made of Nankin, a durable but ugly fabric. The average value of all the Nankin imported during the last four years was 19,000*l.*, and the quantity 32,835 pieces, which, if all had been consumed at home, my tailor informs me would have made 21,890 pairs of trowsers—hardly enough to give a couple of pairs a-piece to the adult males of the town of Leeds.

Of the grand staple of Chinese manufacture—silk, we imported something less than 110,000*l.* worth last year, while we furnished the Chinese with above 1,730,000*l.* of our cotton goods.

But, to return for a moment to such objects of export as China is likely to offer to our commerce. By Lord Elgin's treaty, a port in Chinese Tartary is thrown open to our trade, in about the 42° of latitude—a colder region than 10° of greater altitude would produce in the western world. I will add to this, that Russia has lately erected a free port at the mouth of the great river Amour, opening an intercourse with a territory, wrested at one time or another from the Chinese, computed at half a million of square miles. I will take this opportunity of saying that, instead of entertaining absurd and ungrounded fears of the power of Russia,

because she has established thus a communication with the Pacific, and maritime intercourse with China and Japan, without going round the Cape of Good Hope, we ought rationally and peacefully to avail ourselves of such commercial advantages as her establishments hold out. Danger to us politically, from these establishments, is quite out of the question, as must be obvious at the first glance. The Russian territory on the Amour is 5,000 miles distant from the effectual power of Russia, over cold and roadless deserts. It is, therefore, an isolated and remote colony, very difficult of access, and consequently difficult of defence, adding, therefore, to the weakness, not to the strength of Russia. Moreover, the mouth of the Amour, although only in the 52° of latitude, is, according to Russian statements, icebound for nine months of the year, and when not so, having but 13 feet water on its bar, with a narrow and intricate channel. A formidable naval power, under such circumstances, is an impossibility, and, indeed, to Russia, without a commerce to breed sailors, would be so, were the position ever so favourable.

Tartary, as you know, is a cold country of Shepherd hordes, of small agriculture, but abounding in flocks and herds, and it will be strange if it does not yield wool, hides, horns, and tallow, to pay for the woollens of which, the inhabitants stand in much need, if they have the sense to prefer the woollens of Leeds to raw sheep-skins.

Already we receive a small quantity of wool from China, going under the name of Shanghai, the place from which it is exported. But as the rearing of cattle does not form, as with us, an essential branch of husbandry in China proper, and as the district to which Shanghai belongs contains above 800 human inhabitants to every square mile, I do not think it reasonable to believe that the wool in question can be the produce of such a locality. I imagine, therefore, that it must be from Chinese Tartary, brought to Shanghai by a tedious land journey or sea voyage over 12° of latitude, and its dirty condition would seem to confirm this view, for it would not be dirty had it been a genuine Chinese product.

Of this Chinese wool, we imported in 1855 to the extent of 517,137 pounds, but in the following year the quantity had fallen to 171,329 pounds, and even last year it was only 343,687 pounds. The quality is very inferior, and in its present state evidently hardly worth importing. I have a London broker's account of it, that of Messrs. Southey, and it is as follows: "We regret that we can discover no improvement in Shanghai wool for the two last seasons. It is evidently badly kept in China,—exposed to weather, &c. There is a peculiar character about it (of a fur nature), which makes it handle very soft, but it is extremely kempy or full of stitch hairs." Messrs. Southey add, that when selected and not much damaged, English wool being high priced, the article would sell at from 11d. to 1s., but that the greater part is not worth above 6d. or 7d.

If this wool had, like Indian cotton, been in the hands of Hindus, I should have despaired of it as an import into this country, for four-and-forty years of free trade have produced no sensible amelioration in that cotton which stands, as it did in 1814, at the bottom of the scale. But Tartar wool will pass to us through the hands of the comparatively industrious and ingenious Chinese, and from what I know of them, I cannot doubt but that, in due time, they will improve the quality and make it a marketable commodity in England. The neat and business-like habits of the Chinese, in all matters of trade, would lead to this conclusion, for in this they are like ourselves, and very unlike all Asiatic people, except when the latter are under European direction. A chest of tea, for

example, is lined with a coating of lead thinner than we can make lead in this country, and it is neatly packed and correctly labelled, whereas a case of Cashmere shawls, worth a hundred times as much, will be found in a rude envelope of raw sheep-skin, without any label at all. But I will give you an instance which, I think, pertinent of the capacity of the Chinese to make a rude article a marketable one. As long as sago, now a very considerable article of import, was in the hands of the Malays, it was a coarse, ugly, brown, yet high-priced commodity. About 1814, a Chinese of Malacca said to himself, "These English are rather a fastidious people, and sago is at present a very unseemly article,—I will make it suitable to their tastes." He fell to work to improve it, and produced the present pearl sago, which, although it loses some of its brightness by keeping, very much resembles newly fallen sleet, when it issues from the hands of the manufacturers. At present the raw sago is brought by the Malays from Sumatra and Borneo, to Singapore, where it is manufactured by the Chinese, who produce yearly about 80,000 hundred-weights of it, probably ten times as much as was produced of the old rude article, and at a fourth part of the cost.

Before quitting the subject of these Tartar ports, let me observe that the neighbouring seas afford a fair prospect for the extension of our fisheries, a branch of commerce which may be said to have led to the attempts made by European nations at opening the trade of the Japanese Empire. Besides the whale, these seas are also frequented periodically by shoals of herring, so abundant that fleets of Japanese boats repair annually to the coasts of Sagalien, an island to some portion of which the Japanese lay claim, and which, you will see, fronts the mouth of the Amour. The use to which the Japanese put the herring is remarkable: they use them as manure, making them, in fact, to serve the same purpose as we do sprats in some parts of our own country. Indeed, these herrings, decomposed as they must be, are really a kind of rude guano. The seas and rivers, too, swarm with salmon, as do those of the neighbouring country of Kamschatka.

I come now to the Chinese import trade, which is usually divided into three branches,—the trade with the Malay and Philippine islands,—with continental India, and with Europe and America. From the Asiatic Archipelago, with which I include Siam, since its productions are nearly the same, China receives a great variety of merchandise, nearly all unmanufactured, for these countries may be considered to stand to it in a similar relation as America, or at least tropical America, does to Europe. The list contains some strange products, and the principal of them are as follows:—tin, gold, black pepper, cloves and nutmegs, benzoin, Malay camphor, sapan-wood, sandal-wood, rattans and timber, hides, horns, bones, esculent birds'-nests, tripang or sea-cucumbers, sharks' fins, fish-maws, pearl oyster-shells, tortoise-shells, and ivory. In all the staple articles of this list, China is a competitor with Europe, and with India and Western Asia.

China has tin in several of its own provinces, but has immemorially received a large supply from the Malayan countries, which have the most extensive tin formation in the world, producing at this moment probably half as much more as Cornwall, and of a better quality. It also received from them gold, considerable before the immense supply furnished to the world by California and Australia. All its supply of the finer spices China receives from the Malay islands, just as we do ourselves, for it produces none of them itself. Areca nuts and rattans are supplied from the same quarter, and timber in small quantities, the latter article being one, a trade in which, conducted economically, ought to be a large

one, seeing that cultivated and populous China is deficient in wood, while in these islands, so near to it, there is a superfluity.

Among the articles which I have enumerated are some strange ones of Chinese luxury, which I advert to, not for their importance, but for the illustration they afford of the character of the Chinese. "Birds'-nests," a literal translation of the Malay name, is one of these. It consists of the nests of a peculiar species of swallow, the *Hirundo esculenta* of naturalists, which builds in lime-stone caverns in many parts of the Malay and Philippine islands. The nests are of the shape of an ordinary swallow's, but composed of a marine fucus. While we were in occupation of Java, I had, as the representative of the British government, charge of some of these caverns, the property of the government, and they yielded the State a revenue of 20,000*l.* a year, the most unexceptionable that can well be imagined, for the cost of collection is small, and the whole is voluntarily paid by strangers in the indulgence of a silly and strange, but innocent caprice of fancy. The caverns in question are situated on the southern shore of the island, a furious surge rolling into their mouths. They are accessible only on the land side, and this by a descent, almost perpendicular, of 300 feet effected by a series of rattan ladders, each some 70 feet long. Shakespear's gathering of samphire on the cliffs of Dover, "dreadful trade," is nothing to the danger of this, but I never heard, notwithstanding, of any fatal accident, for the nest gatherers are bred to the trade. The finest quality of these nests, that is, the clean white ones, or those taken before incubation, are worth in the Chinese market, more than their weight in silver, or about 6*l.* sterling for every pound's weight. Assuredly, epicurism was never carried to such a pitch, unless by the Romans when they indulged in the brains of a peacock.

The next Chinese luxury to which I shall refer, is hardly less odd. This is the tripang of the Malays, the *beche di mar* or sea-worm of the Portuguese,—in plain English the sea-cucumber, of which very ugly creature you will see living specimens in the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park, London. The fishing is conducted in the shallow waters along the shores of some of the Malay and Philippine Islands, and even as far as the gulf of Carpentaria in Australia, where the celebrated navigator Flinders, about the beginning of the present century, found the people of Macassar in Celebes carrying it on with Chinese capital. Gutted and smoke-dried, the sea-cucumbers are sent to China, to a large amount. The trade in them is one in which none can engage but experienced Chinese brokers, for the varieties in quality, some thirty, are undistinguishable by strangers, and depending neither on size, colour, or place of production, the lowest quality in the Chinese market not being worth more than a shilling a pound, while the highest will fetch fifty times that amount.

The only other article of this class that I need mention is Malay camphor. This is the produce of a tree called by Botanists a *Dryobalanops*, while the Chinese and Japanese article of the same name with which we are all familiar is the produce of a laurel. The Malayan camphor is a natural concrete essential oil obtained by felling and splitting the tree, but differs from the camphor of the laurel in no appreciable manner. The Chinese, however, are satisfied that it possesses high medicinal virtues, and while a pound of their own may be had for a shilling, they will pay forty shillings for the Malayan. The tree which abounds in some parts of Sumatra and Borneo, although it yields but a small quantity of the concrete oil, yields the liquid as profusely as pines do spirits of turpentine; but on this, equally fragrant with the concrete, the Chinese set no value.

The singular and extravagant luxuries I have now named are valued by the Chinese under the belief that they are highly restorative—that, in short, they will make old men and women young again, a prodigious mistake respecting them or anything else, but one under which they have been labouring for many centuries, and of which it would be quite hopeless to attempt to disabuse them, and so let the wealthy, to whom such expensive luxuries are necessarily confined, pay for their foolishness. Europeans have not believed in an elixir of life for the last 300 years, and the belief in “tarwater” as an universal remedy was very ephemeral among us, but at the present day the Chinese believe as firmly in the virtues of swallows’ nests, and smoked sea-cucumbers, as they did when building the Great Wall, that it would keep out the Tartars. Here is a fair sample of the difference between the genius of Europe and China! I have partaken of birds’-nest soup, and thought the best part of it, and that not very good either, the fat pork and fat duck which it contained, and which alone gave it flavour. Once I tried a sea-cucumber stew made by an accomplished Chinese cook, and for common decency-sake swallowed the first mouthful, but did not take a second.

Continental India furnishes China with a few dainties like those of the Islands, such as shark’s-fins and fish-mawes, of which soup is made, together with some sandal-wood, and other minor articles, but the great staples of this branch of trade are raw cotton and opium. The cotton exported from India to China is the produce of the least populous parts of the Peninsula, its southern portion. For this article England has a competitor in China, and England and China a formidable one on the spot, the populous Provinces of the valley of the Ganges, which cannot raise enough for their own consumption, and are, consequently, in this respect in the same position with China. The cotton of India is generally imported into China to the annual value of 1,500,000*l.* The unelastic manufacture of India has never furnished a single yard of any kind of cotton fabric to China, and the bulky and low-priced raw material has only served to make up the defective native supply of two or three of the maritime provinces.

Of all foreign imports into China, by far the most important is opium, and as this is a subject of importance, not only on account of its magnitude, but for the interest it has excited in England, you will allow me to consider it at some length. The opium-poppy is a native of Asia Minor, and in Hindustan an exotic, which, on account of the ardent heats of the summer, can only be cultivated during the winter or cold season. It is not, and cannot be cultivated in any part of India from about the tropic all the way to the equator, at least so as to produce opium. Certain parts of India, therefore, but they are very extensive, have, as it were, a natural monopoly of the production of opium. At present they are chiefly Behar and Benares to the east, and Malwa and other districts of Central India to the west.

The poppy and its produce seem to have been unknown to the Hindus, and to have been introduced into India by the Mahomedans, the same purists that taught Europe the art of distillation, or manufacture of ardent spirits! They, too, it was, who introduced opium into China, where the poppy is as much an exotic as in India. Of the time when they first introduced it we have no information, but not improbably it was as early as the ninth century, for at that time Arabian and Persian merchants had a commercial intercourse with China. In a list of commodities imported by the Mahomedan merchants of the West into Malacca, in the commencement of the sixteenth century, to exchange with the junks of China, opium is expressly named as one, and its price quoted. Malacca was at this time an emporium of the Indian trade. The party I am quoting

is the Portuguese Balbosa, or Barbosa, a cousin of the celebrated Magellan, and who was killed, as was his leader, when they discovered the Philippines in the first circumnavigation of the globe. The narrative—an authentic, intelligent, and veracious one—is dated at Lisbon in 1516, but has reference to Malacca before it was conquered by the Portuguese, which happened in 1511, only thirteen years after they had reached India by the Cape of Good Hope, and it was before this nation had reached China. It was one hundred years before the English visited India, and one hundred and fifty before they had any opium-producing country in it. I mention these facts only to show you that the taste for opium existed in China long before the Chinese knew any European nation, and that its use with them is immemorial—not a vicious novelty introduced by Europeans.

The cultivation of the poppy in India yields to the British Government a nett yearly revenue of 4,500,000*l.* This formed a full fifth of the nett revenue of all India, of 150,000,000 people, as that revenue stood when Indian finance was in its best condition, previous to the rebellion. Every shilling of this large sum is contributed by strangers—by Malays, Javanese, but, far above all, by Chinese. The people of India, in their poverty, can contribute no more than 17,500,000*l.*, which is at the rate of 2s. 4d. a-head, and all who know their condition know very well that it would be impossible to squeeze out of them the additional 2d. to make up the half-crown. It follows, then, that if India is to be kept, the 4,500,000*l.* must be got somewhere, and if not from opium and the Chinese, then out of the pockets of the people of England, a disbursement which the people of England are assuredly by no means prepared to make.

In my own first recollection of the Chinese opium-trade, which dates some forty-four years back, the annual consumption used to be about 2,000 chests, and the value, probably, about half a million sterling. When British capital and enterprise came into the Indian field, after the opening of the trade in 1814, a vast and natural increase took place in the export of opium to China, and in 1831, shortly before the overthrow of the tea monopoly, the quantity had already amounted to 18,760 chests, of 140 pounds weight each, and to the value of 2,800,000*l.* In 1849, the quantity had risen to 49,870 chests, and last year to 76,300, valued at 7,200,000*l.*

Now, with respect to this seemingly large, but relatively to the number of the consumers, no very exorbitant consumption, let us consider it in so far as it affects the health and morals of the Chinese. My own settled conviction is, at that the utmost, it is not worse than any of our own stimulants, every one of which may be abused, but may also be used with impunity, and often with advantage. The Chinese, it should be observed, never take the crude article into the stomach like the Turks, but inhale its fume, and this, too, only after the drug has been seethed, and virtually reduced to its least noxious form—morphine.

The superiority of opium over ardent spirits, our most potent and frequent stimulant, cannot, I think, be questioned by any reasonable person that has had experience of the effects of both. On this point, I am enabled to give you as high a medical authority as it would be possible to refer to at home or abroad. It is that, also, of a distinguished philosopher, my friend Sir Benjamin Brodie, now justly raised to the Presidency of the Royal Society. The opinion to which I refer is to be found in a charming and most instructive little book called "Physiological Enquiries," a fit and equal companion to the "Consolations in Travel" of Sir Humphry Davy. I give you the passage at full length, because far

superior to anything that I could myself furnish :—"The effect of opium when taken into the stomach, is not to stimulate, but to soothe the nervous system. It may be otherwise, in some instances, but these are exceptions to a general rule. The opium-taker is, in a passive state, satisfied with his own dreamy condition while under the influence of the drug. He is useless, but not mischievous. It is quite otherwise with alcoholic liquors. When Bishop and his partners murdered the Italian boy, in order that they might sell his body, it appeared in evidence that they prepared themselves by a plentiful libation of gin. The same course is pursued by house-breakers and others who engage in desperate criminal undertakings. It is worthy of notice, also, that opium is much less destructive to the individual than gin or brandy. Many opium-takers live to a great age, while dram-drinking induces diseases of the liver, with their attendant bodily suffering, ill-temper, wretchedness, and premature death."

You have all heard that Malays sometimes run a-muck, and that in order to prime themselves for their desperate wholesale murders, they charge themselves with opium. The running a-muck is true enough, but the opium-taking a fable. Were a Malay to take opium when meditating a muck, he would assuredly be in the passive, self-satisfied condition described by Sir Benjamin Brodie, that is, without the inclination or the power to run a-muck. Most probably he would be fast asleep, and dreaming, not of murder, but of a Mahomedan Paradise and its Houries!

Having mentioned the phrase "running a-muck," I will give you briefly its proper meaning, its correct pronunciation, and the history of its introduction into our language, for there it stands as classic English. The real word is amok, and signifies any desperate and reckless charge—what our soldiers now call "a rush." When, as the sun went down, the English Guards charged at Waterloo, a Malay would say that they run a-muck; and when my gallant and greatly-esteemed friend Lord Clyde, leading his infantry in person, made a rush into the Secunderbagh in Lucknow, a Malay, if present, and describing the charge, would say that the affair was a grand amok, and call his Lordship a pangamok, or muck-runner, for that is a verbal noun derived from the radical. The word is pronounced without the final k, and as soft as if it were Italian, not "muck," which is as unmusical as a Chinese monosyllable, with, moreover, a very noisome association.

The Chinese Government at one time, but does so no longer, charged us with poisoning its subjects with our opium. If, however, we look back to the proclamations which were put forth on the subject, before the war of 1842, we shall find that the moral branch of their argument was a mere make-weight to assist the real one, which was, that opium was robbing China of its precious metals, and thus threatening to reduce the Empire to beggary; for the Chinese are firm and implicit believers in a foolish doctrine in which we were ourselves, not very long ago, believers too, that gold and silver are the only substantial wealth. At the time in question the precious metals had been constantly leaving China, for the plain reason that they were cheaper and more abundant in China than abroad. They had for some years before been, as they have now for some years back been doing, constantly flowing into China. The constant cry of Chinese functionaries before 1842 was, "The black dirt is always coming in, and the pure silver always going out." Not a word is now said about the "black dirt." Indeed opium goes, at present, under the polite name of "The Foreign medicine," and is as regular and open a branch of trade as are silk and tobacco. A regular import duty is even levied upon it as upon any other article of importation, and in the pending negotiation

between Lord Elgin and the Chinese Commissioners, on the subject of the future, the sole question is the amount of the duty. The Chinese, in fact, have come to their senses, although the process was a painful and tedious one that brought it about.

It might be supposed that this resolution is the result of the punishment inflicted for the destruction of some millions' worth of British opium in 1841; but this is not the true explanation, for the poppy is now, and has for many years been openly cultivated in several provinces of China for the production of opium. The quantity yearly produced has been reckoned at 60,000 chests, but most probably it equals what is imported. Luckily for our trade, and still more so for our Indian revenue, the Chinese opium, although of greater strength than the Indian, is not so much to the taste of the Chinese, who are epicures in opium as Englishmen are in wines. The use of the Chinese opium, therefore, because it is cheap, is confined to the vulgar, whereas the Indian is the consumption of the gentry and nobility, of princes of the blood, and as M. Hue informs us, of judges on the bench. "During our long journey in China," says the lively Frenchman, "we never met with a court of justice in which opium was not smoked openly and with impunity."

Some very good and pious, but speaking as a politician, not very wise men, horror-struck at opium-smoking, even when in excess palpably not so bad as excessive dram-drinking, have proposed the very violent remedy of a total extirpation of the poppy within the British dominions in India! The objections to this monstrous proposition are so manifold that it is difficult even to enumerate them, but here are a few. The proposed extirpation would amount to the destruction of a product of Indian agriculture, which, for oil and opium, is as important to some districts of India as is barley for the production of beer and gin to some districts of our own country. The extirpation of the poppy in our own dominions would not suffice, for it is largely cultivated in foreign Indian states, not subject to our jurisdiction, and where, if we carried the destruction of the plant by force of arms, and there could be no other means, we should most surely produce an insurrection. The destruction of the plant, if effected, must be wholesale and not partial, for reservation would be impracticable, and being total, we should necessarily deprive the Indians of the most sovereign remedy against pain within the whole bounds of the *Materia Medica*. The destruction of the poppy would imply the loss of "one-fifth part" of the net revenue of India, and no means existing for making up the deficiency, English taxation, or the loss of India, would be the alternative. Further, the destruction of the poppy would be the loss of a branch of commerce of the yearly value of 7,000,000*l.*, a sum which enables us to pay for all our tea, leaving a balance of 2,000,000*l.* to pay for part of our silk. Even to the British merchant and consumer, the Indian poppy is not unimportant, for of its seeds we imported last year, for "crushing" alone, thirty thousand quarters, worth near 100,000*l.* Then, the entire extirpation of the poppy in India would, of course, operate as a bounty on the production of more opium in Turkey and China, and the articles produced in these countries being cheaper than the Indian opium, the Chinese consumption would of necessity be larger than it is now. Such then would be the certain results of this truly extravagant and absurd proposal of pious but thoughtless men.

It will be a matter of curiosity—perhaps of some instruction—if I compare our own consumption of imported potables with the Chinese

consumption of foreign opium. Last year, our consumption of imported spirits was, gallons 3,276,717, of the wholesale value, duty included, of 2,372,970*l*. Were the Chinese, then, proportioned to population, to consume foreign opium, the value of their consumption of it would not be 7,200,000*l*., but close on twenty-eight millions and a half, which would purchase, not 76,300 chests of the drug, but full 300,000 chests!

If to this we join our consumption of wines, and in fairness it ought to be, since it is not to be denied that one can get drunk on claret as well as on gin or opium, and with far more risk of the gout; and as the Chinese have no equivalent, better than 6,600,000 gallons of wine, according to last year's consumption, will have to be added, of the value, duty included, of not far short of 4,500,000*l*., a sum which, reckoned on the population of China, would cost 54,000,000*l*.!

In these estimates I do not take into consideration our own very liberal supply of domestic potables, because the Chinese consumption of home-made opium, and of a certain detestable spirit called Shamsoo, may be looked on as a compensation. From such figures as those I have now given, I think that we must come to the inevitable conclusion that the Chinese, notwithstanding their addiction to opium-smoking, are a soberer people than ourselves. Indeed, I have no recollection of having ever seen a drunken Chinese, but I have of a very considerable number of drunken Englishmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen, and Welshmen. One cannot, for that matter, be absolutely sure of not having seen the whole four drunk at one and the same time, in the great and enlightened city of Glasgow!

I come next to the branch of my subject most interesting to ourselves,—our own direct trade with China. Last year our exports amounted to about two millions and a half (2,505,174*l*.), and our imports to near eleven millions and a half (11,448,639*l*.), the great difference of nine millions being balanced by Indian opium and cotton, and by bullion remitted from England.

My chief business now, however, is with our exports,—which are surprisingly small, for the most numerous and wealthy people of all Asia, and the reasons why they are so, I shall endeavour presently to explain. Our staple exports to China consist of cottons, metals, and woollens. Our cottons in 1857 amounted to the value of above one million seven hundred thousand pounds (1,731,809*l*.), or near seventy parts in a hundred of our entire exportation. This branch is not of much more than thirty years' standing, and had the monopoly continued, and in its pristine vigour, it is certain it never would have existed at all. Our kinsmen, the Americans, are active competitors with us in cotton fabrics of sorts well suited to the Chinese market by their cheapness and durability. It is well for them, for the Chinese, even for ourselves that they are so, for it is not good for man, woman, child, or nation, to have it all their own way.

Our export of metals to China last year, when it attained its largest amount, was only of the paltry value of 160,000*l*., and this to a country whose own supply of copper, lead, iron, and steel is deficient, the last two commodities being over and above, of a very bad quality. The East India Company supplied neither lead, iron, or steel, but there was an Act of Parliament exportation of copper, to the yearly amount of 1,500 tons. This was the work of the Minister of the day, William Pitt, to please Cornish mine proprietors. To further gratify the same parties, who were surpassingly well represented in Parliament, the Company used to export Cornish block tin, to come into competition in the Chinese market with Banca grain tin, far better and far cheaper. How these com-

modities were disposed of, at the cost of English consumers, I shall consider under the head of woollens.

Our intercourse with China dates from the year 1683, only five years before the Revolution, and from that time and down to thirty years back, woollens formed our chief exports to China, as, indeed, they had long done, although not for so prolonged a time, to every country in the world. They were then our principal manufacture, and I take this opportunity of expressing the strong suspicion I entertain that, in time, they may become so again, taking rank of cotton. Allowing equal ingenuity and capital to be applied to the two branches of manufacture, my grounds for this notion rest on the superior stability and certainty of the raw material in the case of the woollen manufacture. For our supply of raw cotton, we depend chiefly on one country; and, without attaching any great importance to that being a foreign one, since that country is, for the present, as much interested in furnishing a supply as we are in getting it, it is certain that a time must sooner or later arrive when, by increase of population, the price of raw cotton must rise, and, America, then become a *bonâ fide* manufacturing country, become also, the best market for its own raw produce. Meanwhile, the contingency of bad crops and consequent scarce and dear supply must be looked for from a producing country which does not extend over above ten degrees of latitude, all in the same hemisphere, and all on the same side of one continent. The inconveniency of such a sole source of the supply has, indeed, been already felt, and strenuous efforts made, as yet in vain, to apply a remedy.

The position of the woollen manufacture seems to me to be a far more stable one. For the principal part of the raw material we depend on our own home produce; and for the next largest on a very young colony, not likely soon to be a manufacturing country, and, indeed, from the peculiarity of its soil and climate, perhaps never likely to become so.

Last year, the declared value of our woollen manufactures exported to China was but 286,852*l.*, and it was the largest of the last five years, for the average export was no more than 215,000*l.* worth,—surely a paltry supply for a people numbering 362 millions, inhabiting a country, every part of which has a cold season—the major part a sharp winter, and whom we have been supplying with this article for above 170 years!

Let us for a moment look back to the nature and history of our trade in woollens with China. The Chinese have hardly any woollen manufacture of their own, in this matter differing wholly from their condition as to silk, cotton, and even linen represented by what we choose to call grass-cloth, but which is, in reality, the produce of a species of nettle. They have, notwithstanding, been familiar with broadcloth, although not English, ever since they had intercourse with Europeans, and, most probably, long before it.

While the East India Company held a monopoly of the trade of China their staple export was always woollens, and their management of this branch of trade is worth describing even now, not only as a curious illustration of the mis-management of a monopoly, but also of the dulness and ignorance that so long submitted to it. In the five years ending with 1813, inclusive, being the last five of the Company's entire monopoly, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Straits of Magellan, their exports of woollens amounted to 248,616 pieces of all kinds. In the five years ending with 1831, or within two years of the close of their Chinese monopoly, the quantity had declined to 169,578 pieces; or, in eighteen years' time, no one can tell why, it had fallen off by better than 79,000 pieces.

But, since the era of free trade with China, in 1834, there has been a still greater decline in our export of woollens, for on the average of the five years, ending with 1857, the total number of pieces, exclusive of 5,500*l.* worth entered by the yard, was only 74,189 pieces. A noble lord to whom I have the pleasure of being known, and whose private virtues and active public benevolence I greatly respect, although I cannot extend my respect to his commercial and economical notions, used in his place in Parliament, such figures as I have just quoted in favour of his proposal to suppress the opium trade. On that occasion he insisted that if you only extirpated the poppy in India, and deprived the Chinese of the power of smoking its produce, the Chinese would take at once to broad-cloth and calico.

I believe, however, that I can furnish you with a more reasonable account, than does this assumption of Lord Shaftesbury, of the large export of woollens under the monopoly and the smaller under free trade. His lordship's notion, indeed, strikes me to be very much on a level with a project of the French Government, if such a one could be supposed possible, as increasing the consumption of French silks in England by stopping our supply of French brandy; or a still madder one of our own Government, prohibiting the distillation of rum in our colonies, and its importation to England, in order to increase our supply of sugar, and promote the cause of sobriety and morality.

In the good old time the trade of China was, in every branch of it, a monopoly. On the British side there was the Company, and on the Chinese the Hong merchants, being some half-dozen dealers, into whose hands the whole foreign trade of the Empire was consigned. Even under the Company's wing, there flourished snug little monopolies in the manufacture and dyeing of woollens. The woollens were bartered for teas, at fictitious prices, the Hong merchants putting an additional price on teas to cover their loss on the woollens, and getting rid of the woollens at less than their prime cost, the British consumer paying in an enhanced cost of tea for this mercantile swindle. I will give you a sample of the results. The teas called Congos formed then, as they still do, about two-thirds of our whole consumption, and amounted to about 20,000,000 of pounds. These teas, which are now worth on an average about a shilling a pound, were sold by the Company at the average rate of 2*s.* 6*d.* a pound, the difference making a tax on the consumer of a round million and-a-half,—a contribution quite sufficient to have enabled the monopolists to have exported a much larger amount of woollens than they did, without any very serious detriment.

As to the hypothesis of increasing the Chinese consumption of woollens by the suppression of the opium trade, supposing that wild project to be practicable, it is one that will not bear examination. The Chinese have a very general taste for opium, as we have for French wines and brandies; and so have they also for good clothing, when cheap and suited to their wants. Our commercial intercourse has hitherto been confined to a few spots on the seaboard of an empire extending to 1,500 miles in every direction. Over this vast surface a ball of opium, which weighs little more than three pounds, is worth five pounds sterling, and consequently is as easily and cheaply carried as the same weight of silver; but it is very different with a bulky weight of woollens or calicoes, and hence the opium is widely diffused and extensively consumed, but not the manufactures.

The consumption of Russian woollens in the northern provinces of China must be accounted for in the same manner as that of British under the monopoly of the East India Company. The trade between the two

nations is conducted on both sides by associations possessing a monopoly, and their respective wares bartered against each other's, so that the prices are nominal and factitious, the Chinese charging on their teas what they would lose on the Russian woollens which they vend to their countrymen at what they will fetch,—very probably at less than their prime cost. The Russians (brick tea for the Tartars excepted, which the consumers receive through other channels than the monopoly) purchase only the very finest teas, for no other would bear the expensive land carriage between China and Russia. These are probably of the same quality as our Flowery Peko and Gunpowder, and, indeed, as China has but one source of supply, they can be no other. With us the cost of a pound of them, duty included, is seldom above 5s., whereas the caravan teas of Russia are sold in Moscow or St Petersburg at 20s., or fourfold that price, while the lowest price of the coarsest tea is as much as 6s., or a shilling beyond our finest. Tea in Russia, indeed, is the mere luxury of the wealthy, and considering its cost can be nothing else. This is, in fact, sufficiently proved by the smallness of the consumption, which I have never seen stated as exceeding 6,000,000 pounds, which relatively to population is less than “one twentieth part” of what we consume ourselves.

There is no other way of accounting for the Russians, without our capital, our skill, or our raw material, and against the obstacle of a land transit of 5,000 miles over deserts, seeming to undersell us in the markets of China. Now that the Russians are for the first time permitted a maritime intercourse with China, and that the present emperor is disposed to a liberal and enlightened policy, the probability is that the monopoly will be abolished, when the Russian people will get cheap tea, and nothing be sacrificed but an export of imaginary value.

The only other Chinese import to which I need refer is that of the precious metals. These metals, however, as is the case in all countries except those in which the chief mines exist, are sometimes imported, and sometimes exported, according to the exigencies of trade. In my first remembrance of the China trade, they were habitually imported; but in due time, a series of years ensued, in which they were constantly exported—silver to the annual value of two millions sterling, and gold to that of half a million. In late years they have been continually imported, and to an unprecedented amount, chiefly from England and America. This has been principally caused by the large and sudden demand for raw silk in Europe, the extent of which may be judged when I state that last year we ourselves imported of that article to the value of better than 6,800,000*l.*, whereas the average value of the same commodity for the preceding three years was but 3,700,000*l.* China exported, indeed, last year to all countries to the extent of 112,000 bales, of the value, on the spot, of 10,000,000*l.* Now again, China, with a diminished export of silk, and nigh saturated with the precious metals, imports comparatively little.

I have never led myself to believe that the export of the precious metals to India and China was a whit more prejudicial to us than the re-exportation of any other foreign merchandise. Merchants exported them, because at the time, they were the most profitable things to export, and what was most advantageous to merchants was necessarily so also to the state.

Much has been said about hoarding and the burying of treasure in the East. No doubt it is carried to a considerable extent in periods of anarchy and alarm, but generally, although with some loss, it is recovered by disinterring on the return of order and tranquillity. I was myself, on one occa-

sion, an eye-witness to the disinterring of a considerable amount of treasure. When we captured Rangoon, in 1824, many of the inhabitants buried their silver ingots. On the return of peace, and the restoration of their territories to the Burmese, I was in civil charge of Pegu, and the owners of the buried treasure having more confidence in us than in their own officers, who were to receive charge, asked permission, before the surrender, to disinter their money. A military guard was sent to see this done, and, for further security, the disinterred treasure was shown to myself. In a few cases only, the money could not, after much labour, be found.

Some treasure, then, no doubt, is hoarded, or lies useless, in Eastern countries, but the amount is perhaps not large, and with the Chinese, who understand better than any other Oriental people the use of money, it is probably very inconsiderable. At the same time it is obvious that, compared to the operation that the precious metals have to perform as a circulating medium, the amount of them required in the East will be much larger in proportion than in Europe, owing to the absence of reliable banks, of paper-money, and of bills of exchange—in a word, owing to the absence of credit and confidence.

China, unlike Hindustan, which has none, has many mines of gold and silver, the last of these, perhaps, the most productive in the world, after those of Mexico and Peru. It furnishes, therefore, the principal part of its own supply. In proof of this, it will be remembered that within the two years that followed the peace of Nankin, they paid ourselves a contribution of 6,000,000*l.* almost entirely in Sycee, or native silver, a very pure metal.

The average of all our exports from the United Kingdom to China, for the two years ending with 1857, amounted to no more than 2,395,954*l.*, and this was an increase of no less than 1,230,398*l.* on the average of the two preceding years. The largest export was that of last year, namely, 2,505,397*l.*, and it exceeded that of the East India Company towards the conclusion of their monopoly in 1831 nearly five-fold, for that came to no more than 519,443*l.* We have been, then, even in this matter large gainers by the abolition of the monopoly. Still it is evident that a consumption which gives little more than "half-a-farthing a-head," for the most industrious, and, upon the whole, the best-governed population of Asia, is not what it should be, and I have to glance, therefore, at the causes which have thwarted it.

In the first place, it is to be remembered that the Chinese, in their quality of consumers of British manufactures, are not Europeans. This will be made plain enough by a few figures, which it will suffice to give in round numbers. Did they, then, consume British produce and manufactures in proportion to numbers, as the Russians do, their consumption, instead of 2,500,000*l.*, ought to be 15,000,000*l.* Were their consumption proportioned to that of the French, it would be 100,000,000*l.*, and were it in proportion to that of the Anglo-Saxons of the United States, it would amount to 264,000,000*l.*! It is true that China is a remoter country than these, but, on the other hand, the imposts on our manufactures are much higher in the countries in question than in China, while all of them have what China is, at least in this matter, wise enough not to have, protections for their own manufactures. However favourable, then, the conditions under which our intercourse with China may be carried on, it is quite certain that, proportioned to population, it will never equal our trade with nations of the same race with ourselves,—of people with manners, tastes, and fashions similar to our own.

An obstacle to the consumption of our manufactures necessarily exists in the poverty of the great mass of the Chinese people. A coat of Leeds broad-cloth would, no doubt, be a great comfort to a Chinese day-labourer, but the man that earns but 4d. a day, who pays as high for his bread as an English labourer, and ten times as much for the condiment of salt, cannot afford to wear even the coarsest broadcloth. Although, however, the great body of the Chinese people be very poor, I ought to add, that there are in the vast mass some millions in very easy circumstances, and many thousands, the consumers of birds' nests and sea-cucumbers for example,—living in luxury.

Another palpable obstacle to a wide consumption of our manufactures by the Chinese is found in their possession of manufactures of their own, generally far superior to those of any other eastern people. A hundred years ago, they were more a manufacturing people than ourselves. The nations of Europe, indeed, long continued to consume Chinese silks and cottons, and it has only been in comparatively recent times that we have excelled them in these fabrics. They, as well as the Hindus and Japanese, quilt their tissues with cotton for a winter dress, and although clothing of this description be but an indifferent substitute for woollens, it is a cheap one. To make the Chinese consumers of our manufactures, we must furnish them with cheaper and better than their own, as well as with such as are suited to their tastes and habits. This, it is obvious, is a condition indispensable to our supplying them.

To the obstacle opposed to the extension of our commercial intercourse with the Chinese from custom and transit duties, I am not disposed to attach much importance. The import duties are in no case high, and at four out of the five ports which have been open to us since 1842, they are evaded by a compromise between our merchants and the Chinese officers. At Shanghai alone they are levied according to the tariff under the inspection of a committee of European merchants, and are not found oppressive. As to the transit duties, in particular, it is evident that the greater number of them will be avoided, when our steamers come to navigate the Chinese rivers, and convey our manufactures directly to the chief marts of commerce. At all events, the tariffs, both of custom and transit duties, are at present under revision by Lord Elgin, in conformity with the treaty of Tin-tsin.

The want of a free and direct communication with the great body of the Chinese people, has hitherto been the chief obstacle to the extension of our trade with China. Down to within the last sixteen years, our intercourse with the Chinese people was confined to a single port at a remote corner, and shut out from the rest of the empire by a barrier of mountains, over which goods could be transported only by porters. The treaty of Nankin only partially remedied this evil. The recent treaty, which we owe to the skill, courage, and perseverance of Lord Elgin, if carried out by the Chinese with good faith, will form a new era in the foreign trade of China. It throws open to us nine additional ports, and two of these, on what may fairly be called the Chinese Mississippi, laying open to us, by a splendid navigable river, 500 miles of the most populous parts of the interior of China.

It is almost superfluous to observe that from home we can furnish China, a country as populous as the United Kingdom, with no raw produce. We can, however, do so from our Indian possessions, or from countries adjacent to them; and this is a branch of commerce evidently capable of great extension. Already we furnish China with them to the

annual value of not less than 10,000,000*l.*, and we may be expected to increase it, by furnishing especially the northern ports of the empire with the corn of Araccan, Pigu, Siam, and the Philippines, as well as with the sugars of the two last-named places. Even a considerable portion of the carrying trade of the coast of China itself is likely, for economy and safety, to fall into our own hands, or into that of other European nations, and, indeed, has already done so, owing to the extensive piracy with which the coasts are at present infested.

What the Chinese trade is likely to grow to, may be inferred from the progress of the conveniently situated port of Shanghai, which lies on a branch of the great river. I take my account of it from that given in the interesting letters of the able correspondent of the *Times*, Mr Wingrove Cooke, who lately published them in a small convenient volume. Shanghai, the very name of which was before unknown to Europeans, was established as a port open to European trade in 1842. In 1856, the fourteenth year from its establishment, its imports amounted to near twelve millions (11,922,806*l.*), of which 4,287,990*l.* was bullion. It exported, chiefly in tea and silk, nearly to the same value.

Notwithstanding this fair prospect of improvement in our commercial intercourse with China, I will not take upon myself the responsibility of recommending any increase of investments for the Chinese markets. We are bound in prudence to watch and wait the progress of events. Besides, I am addressing great merchants and manufacturers, and I am not myself a merchant or a manufacturer, although I have sometimes had the vanity to fancy that I might have become one had I been properly educated. I know well the wide gulf that lies between talking of business and practising it. I think of that gulf, and am bound to be discreet and silent.

John Campbell Esq

Widdrie Lodge

Perthshire

W. Campbell

W.

